

THE UPPER XINGÚ AREA

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Visits might be made to obtain a bride, engage in trade, participate in some intertribal ceremony, or for a combination of any of these reasons. Most visits were ostensibly of a purely social nature, but they were also used to frighten and impress. Stealing was frequent, especially when the host tribe, like the Trumai, was weak. The Trumai rarely protested against thefts while the visitors were still in the village, although they vehemently expressed their indignation later. Such discretion was due more to fear than etiquette. [648] [574] [584] [685] [152]

The inferior position of the Trumai was most evident when visitors were in the village. The Kamayurá, especially, treated the Trumai with arrogance and contempt. At times they would enter the Trumai village without having built the customary warning fire. The Trumai, on the other hand, did everything possible to please their visitors and prove their generosity and good will toward them. Quain was berated by the Trumai chief for being too niggardly toward the Kamayurá, and he found that greater respect was accorded to the Kamayurá chief than to either himself or the Trumai chief. The Kamayurá felt alighted that Quain had not visited them instead of the contemptible Trumai, and, when Quain went to meet the visiting Kamayurá chief, the latter turned away with an air of bored indifference. [302] [123] [554]

The Kamayurá chief was immediately given a stool to sit on and was plied with cigarettes. When he threw one away after a few puffs, he was promptly given another. Deference was also paid to ordinary Kamayurá, although to a lesser degree. Once when such a member came to the Trumai village alone, the man who received him rushed to Quain's house to borrow a chair in order to reach some tobacco which had been placed on a high shelf. He was in a great hurry, for it would not be good to keep his guest waiting. [352]

This behavior stands in sharp contrast to a visit to the Kamayurá village made by Quain and a party of Trumai. The chief delegated their reception to his brother. No special attention was paid to them, although the villagers were active and industrious in an apparent effort to impress. The Trumai were not even asked to sit on the log in the village center.

Due to the extensive intertribal relations, command of a language besides one's own is common in the area generally. But since Trumai is an independent tongue and the number of Trumai small, it is probable that multilingual people were more frequent among them than in other tribes. Their "second" language was usually Kamayurá, but few outsiders spoke Trumai, although more understood it. When Kamayurá came to visit, conversation was ordinarily in their tongue. Of the three foreign women in the Trumai village, only the Suyá woman could speak even a broken Trumai. Since the Suyá had no peaceful relations with the tribes of the headwaters, the Gá language was not widely known there. The other two foreign women merely understood Trumai. [648] [191] [563]

TRUMAI SUBSISTENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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The plaza was the center of Trumai social life. Here guests were entertained, ceremonials and wrestling matches were held, and the men gathered daily. Although the women might sit in front of their houses and watch these activities, they were not allowed to come near the log bench, even when the men were not there. The plaza of the Trumai village was also used as the burying ground. [361] [562]

A short distance north of the circle of houses, on the path to the two main garden clearings of the Trumai, was another smaller clearing used during the *ole*, or manioc, ceremonies. Other paths radiated outward from the village to the other gardens and to nearby groves of *pigui* trees. Quain noticed that the paths leading to the Kamayurá village were much broader and cleaner. The Kamayurá were proud of their paths and kept them in good condition. Their plaza was also clearer of weeds and trash than that of the Trumai. [487]

Of the four completed houses in the village, two were as large as those of the Kamayurá, but the other two, which were much smaller, were considered by Quain's informants to be genuinely Trumai in type. Insofar as is known, the details of the construction and shape of all four were substantially the same. They had an elliptical floor plan and were haystack-shaped. Although the side walls were only four feet high, the roof attained a height of fifteen feet. The silhouette of the house was an almost smooth curve from ridge pole to ground. The frame was covered with a grass thatch. There were no windows, and a single entry opened on the plaza. [342]

Each family occupied its own section of the house and had its own fireplace. Personal belongings hung from the walls and ceilings or were placed on small shelves. Hammocks were hung between the side wall posts and the two center posts, the woman's hammock beneath that of her husband. Except for two nuclear families that screened off their sections with blankets and cloth given them by Quain, there was no internal division of the house. [353] [542] [352] [544]

The two largest garden clearings were situated respectively about one mile northeast and one mile northwest of the village. Three small ones were located southeast of the settlement. In order of size, the gardens were named Nariatan, Waniwanitan, Anariatan, Tan Torake, and Tandatake. Nariatan, the largest, contained, by Quain's rough calculation, approximately seven acres divided into ten plots, representing the gardens of seven men. One plot contained two acres, but the average garden varied between one-fourth and one acre in size. One of the men had erected a temporary thatch shelter in his plot, providing protection from the sun, but not from the rain. Inside there was only a basket of manioc flour, a rack for cooking fish, and a large shallow pot into which manioc was grated. This was the sole garden shelter Quain saw, and, significantly, it belonged to the most industrious horticulturist in the village. [361] [241] [552] [343] [252] [415] [423]

TRUMAI SUBSISTENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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The wool was made of cotton threads. The men's hammocks were usually woven, while those made by the women for themselves were generally an inferior twined product. Other manufactures of cotton were arm and leg bands. [301]

Ceramics

The knowledge of ceramic manufacture cannot be properly considered a part of Trumai culture, despite their daily use of pottery in cooking, manioc processing, eating and storage. All pottery utensils were obtained in trade with the Arawakan Waurá, usually in return for salt. The only clay article of Trumai manufacture was the *ja'meo*, a crude clay griddle on which the *beijú* was baked. The Trumai did not rely completely on pottery for watertight containers, as gourds, grown in their own gardens, were extensively used. [323 439 415]

Wood Manufactures

All woodwork was done by the men with, at the time of Quain's visit, steel tools. The most distinctive article was the zoomorphically carved wooden stool, found among all upper Xingú peoples. Quain's notes contain a sketch of one such stool which is very similar to the one depicted by von den Steinen.⁵ Other wood products were canoe paddles, *beijú* paddles, manioc graters, and mortars and pestles, used by the women to pulverize the hard, dry balls of manioc flour. [352 412 462]

Weapons

Bows and arrows were used almost to the exclusion of other weapons. The Trumai got their bows in trade from the Kamayurá, but made the bowstrings themselves from the fiber of a tree known to them as the *patacy*. They made their own feathered arrows out of cane, at the end of which was inserted a thin wooden shaft. The points were fixed to the shaft with a tree resin (*axalúsu*) and were wrapped at the juncture with cotton thread. Monkey bone points were used for shooting fish and birds. One man who was making a bamboo point told Quain that it was used for hunting and warfare. Another was seen hammering an arrow point out of a piece of metal. [411 439 283]

Spears were not used often, although the Trumai made them. Quain saw a spear point being made of the shin bone of a tapir. The spear-thrower (*zojep*) was used only in the annual spear-throwing contest. It was made from the wood of a palm. Quain sketched one that had a flat handle with a finger hole and a shaft with a hook on the end, and another that lacked the hook, but had a thong on the end. [237 526]

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
SP23 Trumai SP23

PLATE IV

142
302



Yawala

142
302
352
301



Mother and Child in Hammock

[P.48B]

THE LIFE CYCLE

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cumbent upon the males was a prohibition against wearing body paint for several months after the death. This ban extended to women, also. In addition, the female mourner could not sing in any of the ceremonies, and she cut her hair immediately after the death. Marriage was also forbidden her during the mourning period. (Autu came under censure as she had married her dead husband's sister's son — which at any time was reprehensible — even though her hair, cut when he died, had not yet grown back.) The woman was also required to wail occasionally for the dead person during the time of mourning, and she made flat mud discs, about one inch high, in the village center. Quain never found out the reason for this, although Kayaru made several of these markers for her dead brother. No special reverence or respect was given to the markers as they were usually demolished during the wrestling matches. 765 [587]

Recreation and Amusement

Trading seasons have been referred to as "games" because they are a form of amusement, but this appellation is in a way misleading, as the economic aspect of the "trade game" is very important. Actually, except for the intertribal spear-throwing contest, the only organized recreation is wrestling, and this is immensely popular throughout the whole upper Xingú area.⁴ Wrestling matches were especially frequent during intertribal visits and ceremonials. These occasions aroused keen interest, and competitive spirits ran high, but the onlookers made it a point of etiquette to show no partisanship, and the contestants made every effort to conceal latent intertribal hostility. They were always friendly to each other, and at the end of the match they exchanged a friendly embrace. This was not necessary between fellow Trumai or close kinmen of different villages. The most effusive behavior was always shown toward those who were most disliked and mistrusted. 517 437 524 526 648 [77]

Wrestling matches always took place in the afternoon. All that was needed to start a match was a quorum of four or five men. These small bouts were usually informal and more in the nature of practice than competitive contests. When most of the men were in the village the contests attracted more attention and required more preparation. Bodies were painted and arm and leg bands were worn. The hair was usually combed and plastered down. 526 [302]

The men lined up on the log in the men's circle or brought stools. The women and young boys watched from the periphery. Uninitiated boys were not allowed to take part in the men's wrestling, but the older ones were generally permitted to sit with the men. [352] [352]

Each wrestler tried for a grip by grabbing at the body of the other. A variant of the half-Nelson was frequently attempted. The match

⁴ Cf. Galvão 1949, p. 44.

/122 cont./

123 doubts vanished at the end of the trail. Two women there were
192 crossing the path, let out a dreadful scream, and disappeared
with lightning speed into the bushes. A chorus of confused,
shrill cries and suddenly between the trees figures running ex-
citedly hither and thither everywhere. We were in the midst
of the Trumai!

[41] An unpleasant situation. To go back was, of course, im-
possible. Therefore, straight ahead. I have never heard more
insane noise. In the background women and children dashed
away with ear-splitting howls; the men gathered up their
weapons here and there and, swinging bows, arrows, darts,
they drew together into a screaming, dancing, raging knot,
toward which we resolutely strode, one behind the other. I
fixed my eye on a short gentleman who seemed to be the
chief, stepped straight up to him, placed my hand on his
shoulder, and did what is always best on such occasions, I
laughed. Nor did I omit a forcefully expressed "katú katú
karáiba, kúra kúra karáiba." In fact, I addressed several short
sentences to him in a language which he had most probably
never heard, but the sounds of which readily spring to my lips
at critical moments and then always help to triumph over the
gravity of the situation; it is my beloved Düsseldorf dialect,
reinforced with a few carnivalistic catchwords that are appropri-
ate for any situation. They had their effect on the Trumai as
well; the little old chief was, to be sure, too horrified to be
able to laugh with me, but he nevertheless greeted me as
graciously as he could.

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532 Two stools were hastily dragged up and the straw in which
they were packed was torn off; they were bird-shaped, and
one, which represented a vulture, was distinguished by two
necks and heads, like a double eagle. We sat down in the
forest camp, and the company, looking quite wild in their
terror, surged and pressed all around us among the trees. When
I declared with jovial mien that I wanted to sleep among them,
twenty hands moved at once clearing away the brush and making
room -- more attentive service could not be imagined. After

/122 cont./

123 half an hour renewed howling and women's screams announced
152 the arrival of Wilhelm and Carlos, who were led up and likewise
gave expression to their friendly intentions with words and
gestures.

142 /123/ There were mostly small, frail figures with small
heads, receding chins, and ugly faces; among the old women
there were truly magnificent specimens of witch-models. The
291 women in part wore the triangular uluri, in part a wardrobe gar-
ment new to us, a grayish-white bast loop that was drawn over
194 the hips and thickened into a small roll. The language in its
cadence reminded us not a little of that of the Suyá, with which
it had in common the nagging, squeezed habitus and could be
immediately distinguished from all the Kulisehu languages by
the frequent terminal sound of ts and by the f.

727 It was strange that the Trumai had let themselves be taken
by surprise in this way. Probably they had fled from the Suyá
who had plundered their villages and from us at the same time.
Their scouts, who were roving about among the Auetö,
Yalapiti, and Kamayurá, probably believed that we would
not return directly to the Auetö from the Kamayurá, but would
go to Schingú-Koblenz in order to join Perrot and Vogel, whose
trip was already known to them, and reach the Auetö harbor on
the river. The camp of the fugitives presented a spectacle of

162 disorder and confusion. There were about 50 persons in all;
352 numerous small fires were burning beside the brown hammocks,
bundles of all kinds lay about and hung from the trees; the
shelter-huts of the Auetö plantation remained unused. The
501 Indians had come in part by way of the canals: a small flotilla
of canoes had drawn up in the swampy water nearby, many of
them in bad shape and where necessary pasted up merely with
lumps of loam.

437 The beijús, the filled gourd bowls, and the cigars were
necessarily lacking at this reception. They brought small
balls of cotton and asked for beads. Unfortunately, we had
given away almost everything to the Kamayurá and could
therefore not offer much. With the remains, however, a few

Trumai SP23
Waurá SP18
Mehinaku
Auetó SP6
Camayurá

/287 cont./

W chiefly in their beaks; that of the wood ibis is curved ibis-like.
352 The largest and handsomest birds were preferably portrayed.
532 Thus, among the Mehinakú, we found a magnificent king-
825 vulture, Sarcoramphus papa, or red urubu. The red warts

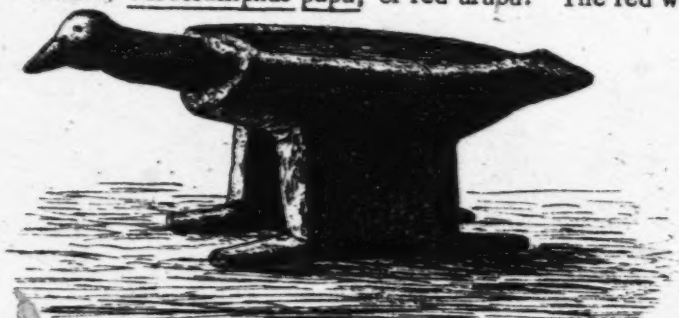


Fig. 82. Tujujú stool. Kamayurá. (1/8 nat. size /as shown in the original illustration.

which this splendid predatory bird has between its beak and its eyes were carefully carved. The Trumai stool illustrated here (Fig. 84 /see p. 326/) is supposed to represent the white urubu; it lacks the warts. Strangely enough, it was given two necks

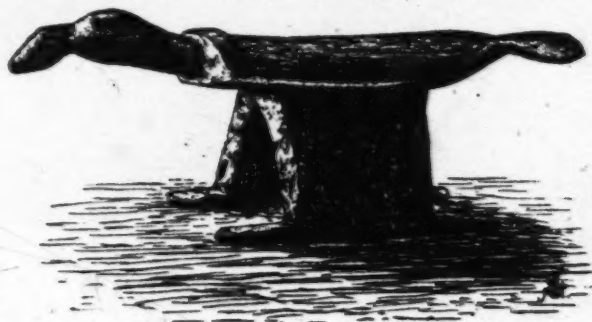


Fig. 83. Wood-ibis stool. Mehinakú. (1/8 nat. size /as shown in the original illustration/.)

and heads, so we see here the chief's chair in the form of a double eagle; they are supposed to be male and female. By contrast, the /288/ the depression in the back-plate is somewhat prosaic; it serves as a bowl for crushing and mixing the dyeing resin. In

[Text continues on p. 329]

/288 cont./

Trumai SP23
Yaruma SP25
Nahuquá
Waura SP18
Mehinaku

T
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532
825



Fig. 84. Double-vulture stool. Trumai.
(1/9 nat. size /as shown in the original illustration/.)

Y
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532
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Fig. 85. Monkey stool. Nahuquá. (1/8 nat. size
/as shown in the original illustration/.)

W
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532
825



Fig. 86. Jaguar stool. Mehinakú. (1/8 nat. size /as
shown in the original illustration/.)

/288 cont./ In

the case of all the birds, the supporting boards /Figs. 84 and 85 appear here/ of the simple stool, provided with rails; have been retained, except that they are now spread farther apart and are set on the center line of the abdomen. The seat-plate and the supporting boards consist of one piece. The upper surface is extremely carefully smoothed. The measurements of the double vulture, which correspond to those of the others, are as follows: 61 centimeters long, 24 centimeters wide, 25 centimeters high.

We found two quadrupeds. Here, too, higher types were chosen. The support boards have been transformed into four legs. Among the Nahuquá we acquired a not very handsome monkey, 46 centimeters long, characterized by the ears, nose, and the long horizontal tail. The back had its natural roundness. The animal was /Fig. 86 appears here/ always immediately identified correctly among the other tribes. The most splendid specimens of our collection, however, is the jaguar of the Mehinakú; a chunky creature, 90 centimeters long and 18 centimeters wide, /Plates XXIII and XXIV appear here/ /289/ with a clumsy head and a well worked-out neck, a long plate-like back and a long, slightly raised tail. The cat's ears are excellently reproduced, the nose is limited to a vague elevation, the mouth is a wide cross-furrow, and the eyes are a pair of round Unio-shell pieces with a mother-of-pearl sheen.

Pots. The basic form of the clay bowls (cf. pages 254, 255) with which we are exclusively concerned here is, like that of the gourd bowls, hemispherical to almost the shape of half an egg. The pots drawn on the two plates 23 and 24 /see pp. 328-329/ are all in the Berlin Museum für Völkerkunde. They come from no particular village, but were made exclusively by Nu-Aruak /Arawak/ women. With the exception of Numbers 25, 26, and 27 of the second plate, all forms are animal motifs. We obtained pot No. 26 among the Mehinakú; it was attributed to the Waurá women, the chief artists of the Nu-Aruak group. It consists of reddish clay, which heightens the similarity to a real gourd bowl, is covered with an attractive mereschu design, and has a string fastened to it. We acquired No. 25, the spiny shell of a forest fruit, from the family of the Yanumakapü-Nahuquá whose

[Text continues on p. 330]